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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἐλπίς το Ὁθια ἀν ἡνα ἡάρουεῖ, ἀγυρ ριόδῶναι ἀπ ἀν ὅταλιν δεαῖτοῖς το να δάοιμῃ.

LUKE II. 14.

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THE HOPE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

SPRING is the season of hope and promise, when the joyous year has just burst from the bands of winter, and entered on a new course of fruitfulness, and a fresh dispensation of the rich bounties of the God of providence and grace—

"When the gay troops of woodland choristers begin,
In joyous thought, to plume the painted wing;
And try again the long-forgotten strain,
In music unconfeined."

On a bright day, in the early part of April, we had been sauntering through the beautiful gardens at Glasnevin, enjoying, with the songsters of the air, the glad promise of every opening flower and budding tree, and the refreshing shade of new spring leaves, and enjoying, besides, a pleasure in which they, perhaps, could not participate—the mirth and laughter of the little parties of children who played upon the green slopes that lead to its tiny river and rustic bridge. As we left this scene, refreshed and gladdened, we returned by the avenue of stately yew trees, which is one of the ornaments and celebrities of these classic grounds. They are called Addison's Yews, and, in their younger days, gave their shelter to Swift, and Steele, and Parnell, and Addison, when they visited the poet, Tickell, once the proprietor of the place. They are sacred to the memory of departed genius, wit, and fancy, and possess a deep interest to the mind of every reader of national literature. As we traversed this avenue, we came to a boundary wall—a low wall, covered with ivy, and surmounted with lofty iron railings, which divides the paradise of flowers from the city of the dead, and reveals to view the long lines of headstones in a thickly-peopled cemetery. Frequently as we have passed the spot, it ever comes upon us with a fresh surprise, a sudden unexpected change—we will not say, an unwelcome intrusion.

On the present occasion, though neither the time nor the season, nor our own frame of mind, were suitable to the mood of melancholy, but rather to the buoyancy of hope, the view that was opened to us was anything but disagreeable. The place had lately become invested with a new and deep interest in our mind—it contained the earthly remains of a dear Roman Catholic friend; and instead of turning from it with the intuitive distaste with which the child of pleasure and the man of the world turns from the funeral procession that meets him in the streets, and obtrusively tells him, "prepare to meet thy God," or with the pang of despair that wrings the heart of an anxious survivor, as he sees the grave close over the body of an impenitent sinner; we could rather look, with a sober complacency, upon the spot where lay the earthly tabernacle of one whose spirit, we believed to be at rest, and in the bosom of Jesus. Born and educated in the faith of Romanism, and never, perhaps, fully awakened to its errors or deadening tendencies, and too gentle for the field of controversy, her mind shrunk with an instinctive knowledge, or rather, a knowledge imparted by the unerring teaching of the Spirit of God, from placing her dependance upon any but Jesus. She would offer no prayers to saints or angels, nor, under the pretence of venerating, would she worship or adore them; and in her last illness, which overtook her in early life, her declared hope was in Christ

crucified, and in him alone; and all her virtues, and her merits, and her ceaseless charities, were, in her eyes, but as filthy rags, sinful and vile, unless as accepted in Jesus.

We immediately left the gay gardens and made our way over to the graveyard, and wandered through its labyrinth of tombs and monuments, till we reached the place underneath which were buried the earthly remains of our departed friend. As we passed along we met at every step the *Agnus Dei*, the representation of the Lamb of God, and the appropriate motto or legend with which the monumental tablets were surmounted—*Requiescat in pace*. It was indeed in no spirit of controversy or disputation that the solemn reflection suggested itself to our mind, in the midst of ten thousands of the dead, and standing over the grave of a beloved Roman Catholic friend—what is the peace which our Roman Catholic friends are led to hope for? What is the rest which their church leads them to expect? Can it be that after the Almighty God has forgiven every sin ever committed by us as to the eternal punishment, a temporal punishment yet remains to be inflicted, which the blood of Christ has not washed and cannot wash out, but the prayers and suffrages of the faithful on earth can accomplish the remittance of? And that after the eternal punishment has been done away with, we are to be purified in long suffering, and, like the wandering spirits of the heathen poet Virgil, to be

"Purged in fires"

"Till all the dregs are drained, and all the rust expires."

Is this the rest and the peace which the Christian church reveals to the departing servants of Christ? Is this the sleeping in Jesus in respect of which the Apostle, Paul, in 1 Thess. iv. 12 and 13 (Douay Bible), desires the Thessalonians not to be sorrowful as others? or can this be the blessedness of those whom the voice from heaven (in the Apocalypse of St. John xiv. 13), desired the Evangelist to write of, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them." Is purgatory this rest? Or was this the hope of St. Paul, when he says (2 Cor. v. 1), "For we know if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven?" Did Paul expect that on the dissolution of his earthly body, or that of his Corinthian brethren, he or they should be consigned to the fires of purgatory? Was this his confidence, as expressed in the same passage (8th verse), when he says, "But we are confident, and have a goodwill to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord?" Was purgatory the presence of the Lord?

This surely was not the hope held forth by our blessed Lord to the dying thief on the cross, who, a moment before, had joined with the other in railing at him. The expiring thief cried to him, "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke, xxiii., 42, 43.) Nor was this the prospect which the first martyr of the church, Stephen, had visibly before his eyes, when, looking up steadfastly to heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God," and with his expiring accents, he cried, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" There was nothing of purgatory there, nor when Paul was declaring the time of his own dissolution to be at hand, did he take such a miserable dishonouring view of the mercy of God, and the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Christ. He cries, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render me in that day." But, it may be said, Paul was an eminent servant and martyr, and this glorious hope was not the common privilege of the humbler members of the Christian Church. But hear St. Paul himself in the concluding words of the passage—"And not only to me but to them also that love his coming." So that it is a crown of justice which the Christian who loves the Lord's coming is privileged to look for, and not the fires of purgatory or hell. And why? Because

the blood of Christ cleanseth FROM ALL SIN (1 John i. 7), and because, as St. Paul says, Romans v. 1, "Being justified therefore by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and in 8th chapter, v. 1, "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh."

Some of these texts suggested themselves to our mind, or, we confess, our reflections would have been mournful; we never could have thought the doctrine of purgatory anything but a cold consolation to the bereaved friend, and disparaging to the stupendous work of redemption; but having a better hope for our dear, departed friend who fell asleep in Jesus, we could joyfully enter into the spirit of the prayer of thanksgiving which the burial service of the Church of England puts into the mouth of the assembled mourners, when they return thanks to Almighty God, "for that it hath pleased him to deliver this, our dear sister, out of the miseries of this sinful world;" and in another service, when we bless God's holy name for "all his servants departed this life in his faith and fear."

We shall return to this most interesting subject again.

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

WE undertook, in our last number, to show that the practice of praying for the dead, which we admit to have been very early practised in the ancient Church, offered no sufficient ground to support the doctrine now held by the Church of Rome on the subject of purgatory. It is, no doubt, true that the doctrine of purgatory includes the practice of praying for the dead; but it is quite another and different question, whether the ancient practice of prayers for the dead necessarily included or implied the existence of purgatory. To that question we shall now apply ourselves in all sincerity, and, we trust, with an ardent desire to arrive at truth, and lead others into it.

The first question is—for whom were those prayers used in the first three centuries, and what was the character of them? If we find them used for the pious and holy men whose souls, according to the belief of the universal Church, were then in heaven or paradise, such prayers obviously do not imply the existence of purgatory, and we must look for some other object in praying for the dead than a delivery of their souls from a state of suffering in any such place. It may be difficult to assign any one reason as the exclusive foundation of a practice which was not clearly referable to the Holy Scriptures; but several may be assigned, all of which seem to have conspired to foster such prayers, long before the period at which the doctrine of purgatory was generally believed, much less formally adopted by the Church. We shall refer to those reasons presently; but first inquire, whether the prayers of the pious living were, as at present, offered up for the relief or delivery of souls requiring to be cleansed in purgatory by suffering the temporal punishment due to their sins committed in their life, or whether the spirits of the blessed (who never were supposed to pass through purgatory) were also the subject of them. Upon this question there is conclusive and most satisfactory proof in the ancient liturgies of the Church, nearly all of which pray for the holy fathers, and orthodox bishops that are dead, as well as all others who had departed this life in their communion. The Liturgies of Alexandria, of Constantinople, of Theodorus, Nestorius, St. Basil, St. Gregory, and St. Cyril, all pray for the faithful dead, and especially those of the sacerdotal order; while that of the Church of Egypt ascribed to St. Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Cyril of Alexandria, and that of the Church of Constantinople, said to be St. Chrysostom's, include the Holy Fathers, the patriarchs, the apostles, martyrs, confessors, evangelists, and the souls of the just who have died in the faith. Especially the ever blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Stephen the first martyr, &c., &c. Surely we can affirm that praying for any of these implied that they were centuries after their deaths in purgatory; and we must look for some other cause for mentioning them in those prayers. To explain this, it will be necessary to state, that, in the early ages, many different opinions were